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Title: The meaning of neoliberal education for Chinese graduate students at UIUC

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Keywords: neoliberalism, youth, Chinese graduate student

Abstract: Our group project was initiated by the question why many Chinese graduate students show tendencies of returning to China more compared to the past. For our resources we interviewed twelve Chinese graduate students in engineering and science departments. We focused our analysis on ten of the twelve interviews, which were conducted with male students, after we found out male students tended to have more firm opinions on the subject issue we were dealing with. In the course of our research, we found out that family, improving economy of China, and nationalism played as important factors for their decisions to return.

Response Paper #1:

Response Paper #2:

Response Paper #3:

Response Paper #4:

Response Paper #5: Interview Observation #3

Steve is a second year PhD student in Civil Engineering. He transferred to UIUC two years ago from a university in Texas. Originally he is from Henan province in Central China. Born just before China's one-child policy, he has one elder sister residing in his home town.

Like the other interviewees, Steve plans to work in the States for about a year or two and return to China. He has not thought much about what kind of job he would pursue but he said that he would probably work at a consulting company related to his major or become a university faculty. He has had his friends ask him to start a business together, but he did not have any intention to do it: he felt that it was possible, but it was not a goal in his life. He said that he wanted to be an "ordinary" person.

When I asked Steve which city he would prefer to work in, he answered he would prefer to work in cities like Austen, Texas, where he went to school before UIUC. The reasons he gave were that he liked the size of the city, and that there were many cultural activities to enjoy while the weather was also agreeable.

As for his preferred cities in China, he mentioned Hangzhou, Chengdu, and Hong Kong. Except Hong Kong, Hangzhou and Chengdu are both middle size cities with beautiful landscapes. I asked him why he would not consider Beijing or Shanghai. He gave detailed reasons why he did not like the big cities. From his experience of staying in Beijing a few summers, he did not like the bad weather conditions and crowdedness of the city. As for Shanghai, despite that a part of the city was a newly developed fancy district, it did not have the authentic Chinese landscape to enjoy anymore. Steve also pointed out that Shanghainese were mostly business-oriented people (which is a common prejudice of Shanghainese), and it was not a good place for developing genuine friendships.

His preference toward Hong Kong, he said, was an exceptional one: he liked the food and shopping in Hong Kong; he also thought Hong Kongese were more of a collective group in which they valued friendship very much (He explained this was why Hong Kong had so many gangs and gang members fighting for each other!).

His personal preferences in future plans were also explicit from the importance he bestowed on personal interest in comparison to salary. On a scale from one to five (one being the least and five the most of importance), he said salary was about 3, while his interest was 4 or 5.

When I asked Steve whether his returning to China would benefit China, he said it would fulfill both personal satisfaction and his devotion to his country. In his prediction, about 70~90% of Chinese students used to remain in the foreign countries they studied in, but now returning to China was the trend. In China, Steve said, you could start a new project, which China does not realize to be important yet. Through such pioneership of the returnees, the level of China would be raised in many aspects. In addition, the mind of the Chinese people would be broadened by the new ideas that returnees bring back to China, such as democracy. In other words, returnees would play the role of the bridge between the old minded, traditionalist Chinese society and the global world, where China needs to go in and compete. As for Steve himself, returning to

China may mean lower living standard; but it may also mean more opportunities to contribute to his country.

I asked him what would be the final and foremost important reason for returning to China. Steve replied that even if he had a green card, he would never be American – he would be called Asian American. Steve said that was difficult for him. He also said he did not want to lose his identity. I am not completely sure what he means by losing identity by being titled as “Asian American.” However, I think he could have thought that being Asian American instead of American meant being not accepted into the society as a wholesome member, which would leave him with an uncertain identity as American.

Then I asked, “Would you consider yourself patriotic?”

“Well, in Chinese we don’t usually use this kind of word – it’s too strong – but, definitely [everybody] wants to be [considered] they are patriotic. But the thing is that people are thinking this in different ways. Like for my friends, they are thinking if they stay in the US they are actually doing good for China. Well, my understanding is a little bit different because I think maybe in China you can do much [more]. But I have to admit that if you are doing a research [as a] faculty, if you stay in the US you can have much much result, achievement than back in China.”

Steve thus emphasized that the form of patriotism differs with different people. For example, he said he would consider some of Chinese professors with green card, or citizenship still Chinese. If they can do better in America as Chinese, they are showing others that Chinese people are doing well; hence it works as a way of loving the country.

Finally I asked him if he would have considered going back to China if the economic situation was not good. His answer was a very clever and well-thought out one. If one could not get any jobs in China, despite of returning with patriotic notions, it would do no good for China and also for the individual; then what would be the wise choice for your country and for yourself?

From his answers, I could see the individualized priorities, which were neither competitive nor nationalistic. Nonetheless, there definitely was the sense of strong desire to contribute to China in Steve’s answers. Being an older person than other interviewees I had interviewed, I felt that Steve had thought about this issue with a

sense of more responsibility. I think that, in his thinking process, he successfully negotiated his personal preferences with his sense of responsibility for his country by redefining what it meant to love the country and how one could contribute to developing it.

**Response Paper
#6:**

**Response Paper
#7:**

**Preliminary
Question:**

Interview/Observation #1: For the interview, I met a female Chinese graduate student majoring in biophysics. In the group meeting prior to setting up the interview schedule, I was told that the Chinese grad students are very busy people and it might be difficult to get a long interview with them. Hearing this, I was concerned that I would run out of time before I could ask all the questions I wanted to cover, so I tried to make the interview short and clear. We met at Illini Union one afternoon and chatted for about 40 minutes.

Jamie was born in 1986 in China. I asked her several times where in China she was from, but she did not tell me the exact name of the town as she thought I would not know where it was. She came to UIUC right after she graduated from college in China.

I started with questions about her major. I asked Jamie what she wanted to do with biophysics. She said she wanted to get a job in a pharmaceutical company. She added she would first look for a job in America before thinking about possibilities in China.

“Is there any reason you want to find a job here [in America]?”

“Let me see. First of all, the job market in China for my major is very small. So it’s even harder for me to find a job in China. And second, I think it’s kind of a proof for myself if I can find a job here. If I just go back to China directly after I get PhD degree, maybe other people will think, ‘Oh, although she has a PhD, but she can’t even find a job in USA. That’s pathetic.’ And third, working here, I think, will give me a better environment... several better environments.”

When I asked which part of America she would like to go, she answered “New York, near New York or California” without giving it a second thought. She clearly showed preference toward big cities.

I asked Jamie if salary plays as an important factor to staying in America. She could explain to me how much the jobs, related to her major, paid in America in numbers. But she only vaguely knew that the job market of her major in China was not big and had no idea how much salary was average. Nevertheless she guessed, though she did not seem to have given it much thought before, that the only way to work in China in the field of her major would be getting a faculty position. I am not sure whether she did not feel comfortable talking about money in any significant way, but it could be that she has long years of graduate studies ahead of her and she does not have to think about it in detail for now.

Then I remembered that many Korean students do not choose their majors according to their preference but according to what gets them the well-paying jobs. Hence I went back to asking more questions about her major.

“Do you like your major?”

“Kind of like, but not too, not like very much.”

“How did you decide your major?”

“It’s quite random. Randomly.”

“Random.”

“Yes. Yes. Because I chose my major very randomly, when I chose my major for my undergraduate program. So in order to continue with my undergraduate major, I chose this.”

“So you don’t really hate it, because you’re still doing it.”

“Yeah, I don’t hate it.”

“But you don’t love it.”

“Yeah, I don’t love it.”

“So like... personal satisfaction wouldn’t be your priority in your career?”

“Personal satisfaction. I don’t know. I just want to get better and better for the overall situation of myself. It’s kind of hard to define

what is a better job.”

I could relate her answers to how Korean youth think about their career – at least the middle class and below. I also think they maybe some of the neoliberal characteristics in the function and use of today’s education.

On the other hand, questions related to parents would be the least neoliberal element in Jamie’s education and career development.

“Before, you said you want to go back to China eventually to care of your parents?”

“Maybe.”

“Maybe?”

“Yes, that’s one option. Another option is picking them up from China to here. But it’s harder for them, ‘coz they don’t know a lot of English. And all their friends are still there.”

“So they’re still in their home town.”

“Can I ask what they do?”

“My mom is a doctor and dad is an engineer.”

...

“When you say you want to take care of your parents, do you mean you want to support them financially, or you just want to live with them?”

“I think I want to live with them. I don’t think they need my money. But I still want to give them my money. Even if they refuse. Probably they will refuse.”

Then I asked how her going back to China after working in America would benefit China.

“If I work back in China, maybe I will become a professor and I can provide better education to the next generation. (laugh) Yes. I think individuals ~~~ really small, but it will accumulate.”

“If you decide to live in America, would you miss China?”

“I think for most part, I will miss my relatives. I think when some bad things happen in China, like natural disasters – this time we had snow disaster – I still care about my country. But if nothing happens, I don’t have special feelings. Maybe ... if I get older, I will have the feeling – I will miss my country.”

I wanted to draw out answers from different aspects, so I asked, comparing China and America, if she thought anything better than the other country.

“In America, the resource is really fruitful [abundant]. Like..., in several aspects I can see America is a very rich country. And also, people waste a lot. That’s bad. And here I think is cleaner than China ... than most of the cities in China. And I think here, the culture is very broad [various] – we have different peoples, we have people of different races. And in China, most of the time, we only see our own people, I mean the people around me are all the same in China. We all look similar. But here we have different people from different countries. And we can learn other people’s culture. And that we’ll really benefit each other. And in America, I think the freedom is much more than China. Ordinary people [in America] participate in the presidential elections. But in China, ordinary people don’t have the chance.”

“Oh, they don’t vote?”

“Um, some people vote, but most of the people don’t. Even if they vote, they’re not as freely as here actually. And in China, I think people eat much healthy food. (laugh) In America, I can always see very over weighted people. They become so big they need to take up two seats on bus. And in China, most of the people, even if they are fatter than they should be, they are still controlled in a certain level. So I think food is much healthy. And also food is very delicious in China. And in China, we also have very precious history, which gives us culture, which gives us knowledge. The best thing in China is that most of my friends are still in China, especially my parents are still in China, my grandparents are still in China. So that’s the place I really feel that’s my home. I think no matter how long I live here, I’ll still feel my home is there. That’s it.”

analysis

Jamie’s answers explain that she has a strong attachment toward

China. Nevertheless, it is more of the emotional attachment from personal experience and not at all political or economic. Although she wants to contribute to the development of China, she values her self-development (being in the better environment) prior to her nationality.

On the second point, a lot of Jamie's stories paralleled the situation of Korean students. Being Korean myself, I could relate to a lot of her points as normal opinions, such as supporting one's parents and focusing on the kind of education that enterprises the self rather than exploring what one enjoys. In fact I think it would not be too difficult to say that her answers were quite standard of how many Asians would think.

To deepen our research, I think it would be good to find out what the Chinese grad students we interviewed define themselves as (e.g. Chinese elite, privileged Chinese subject, member of global community, cosmopolitan? Or maybe all of them). I also think it could be one way to make a base for our hypothesis if we try to come up with more questions (for our interviewees as well as for the general research) that aim at how these grad students position their identity (strategically or fundamentally) in global labor market or in the context of culture and nationality.

Lastly, I think a few sources that explain the base of our hypothesis is crucial. It is important to find out how Chinese grad students were thinking and were represented before. (Do we know for sure that less Chinese grad students went back to China before and why?) For me, this is where I feel most unconvinced.

Group Research 2008-03-03
Question:

For our project we are positing that there has been a historical shift in that Chinese grad students are now returning to China after they finish rather than staying here in the United states, and we want to know why. We are specifically focusing on Chinese grad students in the sciences or engineering.

Here are the questions we have so far, which address money, personal fulfillment, family, marriage, nationalism, and preference.

Do you plan to go back to China? Why?

How important is salary to your decision?

How important is it to get a job that is personally fulfilling?

Do you think you will be better off than your parents were?

Do you have any siblings?

Are you married? Do you think it would be easier to get married in China? How does that affect your decision?

Do you plan to support your family?

Would you like to be closer to your family?

Do you think it is better for China if you return? Or is this important?

If you decided to stay in America do you think you would miss China? Why?

2008-03-24

It has recently been reported that, as a result of economic improvement, more Chinese students are increasing deciding to return to China after studying, e.g. http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2008-01/17/content_7436298.htm. Noting this trend, we will examine the set of meanings that Chinese students mobilize when deciding whether or not to return to China. This will allow us to examine the extent and nature of the effect that improved economic conditions in China have had on Chinese students' sense of national belonging and duty and neoliberalism. We are specifically focusing on Chinese graduate students in the sciences or engineering, because we hypothesize that these fields' proximity to capital makes them particularly sensitive to economic influences. We are also focusing on straight male cisgender graduate students in part to minimize the diluting effect that including women or LGBTQ persons would have on our data, but also, we argue, because gender exerts enough of an influence that there is a discernably different, though overlapping, logic for each of these subject positions, as we have already seen in initial interviews.

The following questions are prompts that we hope will allow us to have conversations about money, personal fulfillment, family, marriage, nationalism, and preferences in food and media.

How long have you been a student here at UIUC?

What are you studying?

How long have you been in the United States?

What do you plan to do after you graduate?

What city would you like to work in after you graduate?

Have you considered returning to China after you graduate?

Which kind of job is more important to you, one with a high salary or one that you enjoy? (This gets at the emphasis on "personal fulfilment" that we have encountered in our readings.)

Do you have any plans to start a business after you graduate? (This gets at their relation to the neoliberal "enterprising self.")

Do you think it would be better for China if you return? Why? Why not? Does this influence your plans for after you graduate? How so? (Nationalism.)

How important are the kinds of food, movies, television, books, and magazines you will be able to access to your plans for after you graduate? (Preferences.)

Do you think you will be better off than your parents were? (This gets at both the socioeconomic position of their parents as well as their sense of the changes that have taken place.)

Do you plan to support your parents? Does this influence where you would like to work after you graduate? How important is it to live near your parents? (Filial piety.)

Do you have any siblings? (Ideally this also lets us get at the socioeconomic position of their parents.)

Have you considered whether you would like to get married? Does this influence your plans for after you graduate? (This is just an attempt to get at some of the factors that might influence their plans, and also connects to some of the moments in our readings where men were more interested in their career than in marriage.)

EUI Links:

Interview/Observation #2: I met Matt on a Sunday afternoon at the lobby of his apartment. We talked about an hour in a casual atmosphere. He seemed comfortable answering my questions and at times asked me back the same questions, which showed a positive interest in the topic itself.

Matt is a first year PhD student in the department of Environmental Engineering. He grew up in Tianjin, a city in Northeast China, and moved to Beijing to attend one of the top universities in China. Matt plans to get his PhD degree in 4 or 5 years and join an environmental consulting company in the States and work for 5 or 10 years. Though he is debating whether to stay 5 years or longer, he is sure he would go back to China eventually. His decision on going back to China was based mainly on two reasons: first, the job market is bigger in China, and second, he wanted to support his parents.

When I asked him if he would consider salary more important than working in a field of his interest, he said,

“I think both, I cannot tell which one is [more] important. ... If I have one chance [where] ... salary is not so little... – medium salary – but I can really enjoy it, then I’ll choose this one, instead of high salary [that] I’m not really interested in.”

From Matt’s answers to several questions, I could tell that he valued variety and diversity as something very valuable to him. To my question, which city he would like to work in, he said he would not want to work in California even though the job market was big there. According to Matt, there are too many Asians in California, which is not so different from China and that is “boring.” He thought Chicago was an OK choice but geographically too isolated. Finally, he pointed out Boston and New York, cities in the Northeast part of the States, as his most attractive cities to work in because there was diversity.

When I asked him if factors such as food and entertainment would be important in his decision making about where to live, he said,

“No. because I think, living ... anywhere, I can find my hobby, or I can just raise another hobby.”

Here, he stressed again, that he was interested in new experience. Still wanting to draw out more explanations, I added that I personally crave Korean food while I am in the States. Then he explained more

about what he thought.

“And also my Chinese friends told me that ‘you’re not so patriotic.’ Every time I [meet] my Chinese friends, their first choice is to go to a Chinese restaurant because they think that it just tastes better. And for me, I always say, ‘no, no, no, let’s try [other kinds]. Maybe... Mexican or Italian.’”

He then explained the reasons: first, he was not picky about food. Second, he had grown up in China most of his life and had Chinese food, and it would be boring if he ate only Chinese food when he was in America. He would rather make some changes and try different things he had not tried before.

Then I moved to questions related to nationalism.

“Do you think it’ll be better for China if you return to China?”

“True, I think so.”

“Why?”

“Because the market... in our major, [it] is the market. Right now, in America, lots of things are fully developed. And so we can learn some more high technology or some more advanced concept and, or, principles. And what I learn here, later [I can] use [for] China and also ... develop some new stuff... [which can] apply more [appropriately] in that area.”

I asked him whether he had thought about this issue before. He answered that he had, but it was still a secondary issue for him.

“Thoughts like that, would they influence your plans?”

“No, as I told you before, I think the first thing for me is my plan, my own schedule, my own career path. [As a] second thing I think [that if I can] benefit China, maybe I can make tiny modifications. But [it will] not influence my whole career.....”

The only dilemma he was struggling with was how to support his parents (i.e. be close by, and, or, provide for them financially) while staying in America. I asked him whether the parents factor influenced his plans of where to work after graduating.

“Yeah, it’s really a big problem for me. And right now I just hate to

think about the details of that.”

His parents seemed to have made it clear that they preferred to stay in China. And as Matt wanted to stay in the States for several years, he still could not find a solution for this question. Nonetheless, he added that maybe his career was his first choice right now and then the second priority went to his parents. He ended his answer, though, saying that his going back to China eventually would solve the problem, and since his parents were already living in Beijing where he wanted to work after working in America, it was a luckier situation for him.

I asked him how important it was for him to live near his parents.

“It is hard to say..... I think I am more independent. I can live without my [parents] but I think that’s not true, that’s not right for them. Because later they [will be] alone. My preference [would be] not to live with them but maybe at least live in the same city.... so I can visit them.”

He agreed that he thought of supporting his parents as a responsibility and duty as a child, without doubt.

analysis

In the course of the interview, he made it very clear that he was a very independent individual and made decisions according to personal preferences. He was also more careful about giving easy and decisive answers.

For Matt, nationalism and sentimental attachments had some personal meanings, but they were not as significant as to alter his career plans. Though he admitted his natural sense of filial duty for his parents, he still considered his individual goal as a priority at the moment.

An interesting discovery for me was the fact that Matt was attracted to diversity, and not only that, but that he thought of it as something unique to America. As my first interviewee also mentioned that one thing she liked about America was its diversity, which she did not have back in China, Matt’s imagination of one-culture China seems to be a generally constructed idea among the youth in China. I think that this idea maybe included as part of what the present neoliberal intellectuals seek in their ideals.

Group Summary: For our project we have sought to learn the meanings that male Chinese graduate students in the sciences and engineering at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign mobilize when making plans for the future, with particular regards to the country they plan to work in. We were motivated to pursue this question after sensing that students here at the University of Illinois are deciding to return to China in greater numbers than in previous cohorts. This intuition has been reflected in our interviews, where these students consider family, nation, and economy, when planning their futures. Though we do not address them here, these students also consider pride, food, and friends when making their plans.

The most prominent reason for returning to China that emerged from our interviews is simply that economic conditions in China have improved in recent years and are expected to continue improving in the years to come. Thomas (who is actually an economist) said he believes students are returning to China because "China is getting better and better," and when we asked him if he might have decided to stay in the United States in the past instead of return he said, "Maybe."

However, these students also place heavy consideration on family when making plans for the future. Dan said, "I think it is best to live with my family in the future." Consideration of family, though, does not always result in the need to return to China. Jing, who does not plan to return to China, intends to bring his parents to the United States.

Finally, another point that these students consider when making plans for the future is the contribution they will make to China. As James said, without explicit prompting, "First, I will return for my parents, second, for China, and third for my girlfriend and I." Again, though, it is not necessary for students to return to China in order to make a contribution to their country. Jing highlighted this when he said, "Even if you have a faculty position in America, it doesn't mean that you will not do anything for your country," and in drawing attention to the opportunities that are available for scientists in his field he opened the possibility that someone could produce a greater contribution to China by not returning.

Paper: *Introduction*

Our group project was initiated on the assumption that more Chinese graduate students were returning to China now than before. Thus we asked what factors contributed in this rising phenomenon and why it was significant. Lisa Hoffman explains "... not only that 'neoliberal' techniques of governing (e.g., marketization

of labor, calculative choice, and fostering of a self-enterprising ethos) have emerged in place of state planning, but also that these neoliberal techniques are linking up with Maoist era norms and values of serving the country.” (Hoffman, 552) In agreement with this statement, we formulated our questions and paid attention to how the Chinese graduate students responded between their identities as neoliberal and patriotic subjects.

Based on the information of the first four interviews with two male and two female Chinese graduate students in science and engineering departments at UIUC, we focused our interest on male students specifically from the second round of interviews. The reason we avoided female interviewees is mostly that the responses of the male interviewees seemed relatively focused and somewhat more determined. Thus we developed our analysis from the ten interviews with male graduate students and the class readings. However, I included the data of female interviewees in the second discussion of other factors students consider when they think about their country.

Patriotism

One of the main reasons our interviewees conveyed to us in response to our question why they wanted to go back to China was deeply related to the sense of patriotism. Although not exclusively stated, the responses that they wanted to contribute to the development of China as a country and the fact that they could clearly suggest how their return to China might benefit their country showed their strong patriotic sentiment.

While all of the twelve interviewees (including females) clearly stated their wish to return to China after having built up their career in the States, not all of them believed returning to China was the only way of expressing their patriotism. One of our interviewees, Thomas, said “I hope my ideas can help Chinese economic rules. That is also my goal to study here. That is why I study here.” At the same time he also commented “I will choose the place where I can contribute most.” Another interviewee, Steve emphasized that the form of patriotism differs with different people. He said that if some people can do better in America as Chinese, they are showing others that Chinese people are doing well; hence it works as a way of loving the country.

Parents

Returning in order to be with, or to take care of their aging parents was the most explicitly stated reason for all the interviewees. James, who ranked his reasons of going back in the order of

importance, said, "First, I will return for my parents." Another interviewee said, "The major reason is that I am the only child in my family, when my parents get older I have a responsibility to take care of them." Another interviewee, Chao, stated that he would go back to China even if the economy was not good, mainly because he had his family there. Yet, some of the interviewees were debating whether they should bring their parents to the States or live with them in China. It was an answer contradicting their strong wishes to return to China one day, and thus showed that they still kept their possibilities open to live on in the US as well.

Self-interest

As well-educated neoliberal subjects, most interviewees valued their interest in their major and developing their career as most important. Matt puts it this way: "As I told you before, I think the first thing for me is my plan, my own schedule, my own career path. [As a] second thing I think [that if I can] benefit China, maybe I can make tiny modifications. But [it will] not influence my whole career." Thomas said, "[it is important that] China is getting better and better for me to go back to China, because it means it is more suitable for living and working." Some interviewees considered "choices," "diversity," and "variety" as considerably important factors for them in choosing where to settle down. In terms of diversity, they preferred living in the States, thinking that the experience would be beneficial to themselves.

Lisa Hoffman writes that "Responsibility in post-Mao China denotes both patriotism and individual interests.... Caring for the nation, however, is no longer about the duty to sacrifice one's future for the nation. In reform era, patriotism is about fulfilling one's potential through responsible choices, also fostering national development." (562, 563) As one interviewee stated that he wanted to serve his country when he can, the pattern we see here is the patriotic professionals that know how to secure their individual interests first. It is also interesting to see how Hoffman's discussion of Chinese youth in China makes a good parallel with the international Chinese students in the US.

Other factors: food, friends, pride

Apart from the major factors, we have also found that quite a few students mentioned food and friends as something to consider in relation to returning to China. One male student, who actually considered food as an important factor for his decision to go back to China, said, "Life is not as good here as it is in China. The food here is terrible, so I am learning to cook. I also have many friends in

China. ...and my friends in China will always be more [in number than friends I make here]." As an answer to where he would like to work, another male student answered, "I think China is even better [than America or Europe, because]... I'm familiar with the culture and especially the food."

It is quite predictable that food and friends factors would not really decide the future plans of highly intellectual elites as these students are. But it is interesting to note that when the subject was up, most of our interviewees had something to say about it.

Another point we would like to note is the sense of pride that our interviewees showed in China. In the course of our interviews, we have felt that the Chinese students not only had a sense of patriotism for their country generally, but also had the sense of pride for what China was in the world. Starting from a simple comment like "I like my country," there were several comments where they showed their pride in China. For instance, one male student said, "China is growing very fast especially in economics. Many foreigners go to China for business so it'll keep getting better and better. I'm sure about that." One female student commented "... in China, we ... have very precious history, which gives us culture ... [and] knowledge." Gathering their positiveness toward China's identity, as defined by them, their sense of pride may also work to strengthen their sense of patriotism.

We think that pride for China as a country, having close friends, and food which they grew up eating, may not play as the major reasons for these students to make crucial decisions, such as where they should get jobs. But these are the general consensus among most international Chinese students when they would talk about being in China verses abroad. In a way, pride, friends, and food that they lightly commented on are in fact important factors, which would permanently lie in the consciousness of these students and remind them of their root, belonging, their attachment and identity. One female student's comment exclusively points this out: "The best thing in China is that most of my friends are there, especially my parents are there, my grandparents are there. So that's the place I really feel [as] my home. I think no matter how long I live here [in America], I'll still feel my home is there [in China]."

conclusion

From the interviews, we discovered that most Chinese graduate students in the field of science and engineering wished to return to China mainly because of the growing job market, the improving

conditions of economy in China, and also their desire to serve the country when they could. We conclude that, though patriotism is not the prior factor, which drives these students to return and work in china, the economic situation in china that now fulfills the individual needs and necessities creates the space for them to practice their patriotism with more willingness.

Hoffman, Lisa. 2006. Autonomous choices and patriotic professionalism: On governmentality in late-socialist China. *Economy and Society* , 35: 4: 550-570.

Reflect:

Recommendations:

Prelim. Research Prop.: Research problem

The term 'cosmopolitan' comes from the Ancient Greek idea, which means a "citizen of the world." (Rizvi 2005) Although this term contains globally shared basic values such as democracy, equality, and pluralism, many scholars also agree that this term now represents the more neoliberal values of acquiring self-interest. (Rizvi; Ong 2006) Rizvi argues that "International education is indeed a site where cosmopolitan identities are produced, but that the meaning that the students attach to cosmopolitanism is highly contradictory and is linked more to their strategic interests within the emergent global economy and culture than to any broader moral conception." (Rizvi) The group research I was involved in for the 2008 Spring semester at UIUC bases its analysis on this understanding that the international education, which produces a cosmopolitan individual, is closely related to following the global economy.

Linking this observation with the current on-going phenomenon of increasing number of Chinese international students returning to China, we made an interesting discovery that one of the main factors that encouraged these students return to their home country was their sense of nationalism along with family and the improving Chinese economy. (Chae 2008) Although there were various ranges and ranks in priority in regard to their personal importance toward nationalism, we have found a clear representation of this factor in the majority of the interviews we have conducted. I find this an interesting twist because nationalism has long been considered to have connotations opposite of cosmopolitanism. (Rizvi) I also think that, in our group investigation, we have overlooked the

characteristics of cosmopolitan in our interviewees.

Research proposed

For further research, I would like to expand the understanding of the complexities of the cosmopolitan mind of the Chinese international students who decide to return to China to work. My main question would be how do the Chinese returnees compromise and negotiate their learned cosmopolitan selfhood with their life back in China. In spite of the various nationalistic responses I have gathered through the group project and the nationalistic movements among the Chinese international students all over the world against the anti-Beijing Olympic protests, their cosmopolitan identities differentiate them from the wholly devoted state subjects. A news report points out that these returnees return “only to enjoy their elevated status. ...[F]oreign companies are [their] first choice of employment followed by private companies, universities and institutes. Jobs on public utilities and Party organizations rank the lowest.” (People’s daily online 2000) This news article suggests a negative, or to an extent hostile, views toward the returnees, which contradicts the nationalistic intentions of the international students I have interviewed.

I think that one of the reasons we have received the rather unilateral responses about returning to China with somewhat nationalistic sentiment is that the interviewees had been abroad only for a short period of time. Quoting Stuart Hall, Rizvi explains that identities are under constant transformation. “And so it is with international students. Their identities are clearly shaped not only by their personal histories, cultural traditions and professional aspirations but are also continually reshaped by new cultural experiences, but in ways that that are neither uniform nor predictable.... Their ‘cultures’ can be expected to ‘travel’, developing multiple attachments, accommodating but also resisting some of the norms and claims of nation states.” (Rizvi) This complex shifting and reforming of identities were what I was not able to find among my interviewees, but hope to investigate in the new research.

This tendency of changing identity is very well presented by one of Rizvi’s interviewees, who explains that he was troubled by the question of home when he did not want to go back to his home country to work anymore; but two years later it became a meaningless question. He then asked “[w]hy do you have to have a home? Why can’t it [be] everywhere?”(Rizvi) I believe that opinions and thoughts about the idea of home may vary with each individual international student; nevertheless, following the changes of

nationalistic thoughts, which many Chinese students initially have, to new ideas after years of experiences abroad and returning to China would be an interesting way to observe the individuals as a group.

Methodology

For this research, I will select Shanghai as the main target field because it was listed as the most popular city where Chinese returnees wanted to live in. (People's Daily Online) I believe the environment of Shanghai, which is fast-paced and rapidly modernizing with a little bit of Chinese feel to it, sets up a new kind of stage for these returnees as it is in their home country, but completely different from their traditional Chinese home town; or in another aspect, it is a global city with plenty of opportunities, and yet their home.

I will interview the graduates of UIUC, who have walked similar paths as the interviewees from the group project. However, I would like to group them according to the number of years they have been away from China, and also whether they have returned to China straight after graduation or stayed back in the States several years for work experience. I will ask questions largely in three categories: 1) whether they feel that their work is contributing to China in any aspect; and if they are doing it consciously and/or intentionally, 2) whether they feel they integrate into the Chinese society completely or feel that they are in fact struggling with similar questions, which Rizvi's interviewee had.

As another part of the research, I would like to study the education content of Chinese public schools. I would mainly search through junior high and high school text books most popularly used in public schools, and find out if there is a thematic guidance in order to construct a certain national value system and philosophy. It seems only necessary to research this area because this trend of nationalism is significant and stands out to contradict the neoliberalizing Chinese education. (Anagnost)

Ethics

In the process of interviewing, I fully understand that I need to cautiously form questions and address them in the ways respectful to the cultures and expectations of the interviewees. I will abide by the general instruction of confidentiality expected, and respect opinions and ideologies of each interviewee. I will also reflect their suggestions and comments on my research topic and analyses.

Research significance

The increasing number in returning Chinese international students has also affected the government policy. For example, in Beijing, the government has set up a special zone for returning students to start their career. Returned students also receive benefits in reduction or exemption of taxation, as well as special funding to set up projects. (People's Daily) This group of returning Chinese students is becoming a significant part of China's economic and social development. In this aspect, the study of the formation of their cosmopolitan identity and the complexities in the shifting of their identities and values maybe a valuable resource to understand how China forms itself into one of the global economic and cultural leaders.

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